

ภาพลักษณ์สตรีชาวอิหร่านในนิยายภาพเรื่อง  
“Embroideries (2005)” ของ Marjane Satrapi:  
การวิเคราะห์การสร้างความหมายแบบพหุวิธี  
Portrayals of Iranian Women in Marjane Satrapi’s  
“Embroideries (2005)”: A Multimodal Analysis

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## บทคัดย่อ

นับตั้งแต่ชีวิตสตรีมุสลิมโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในประเทศอิหร่านได้รับความสนใจในทางวิชาการเพื่อการศึกษาเรื่องลักษณะเฉพาะทางเพศ (gender stereotype) และการกีดกันทางเพศ (sexism) งานวิจัยหลายเรื่องได้มุ่งเน้นศึกษาสภาพความเป็นอยู่ การต่อสู้และการต่อรองทางอำนาจของสตรีมุสลิมในสังคม เพื่อเป็นการเพิ่มขอบเขตงานวิจัยในลักษณะที่กล่าวมานั้น งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อหาการนำเสนอภาพลักษณ์ของสตรีชาวอิหร่านในนิยายภาพเรื่อง *Embroideries* ซึ่งเขียนโดย Marjane Satrapi ในปี ค.ศ. 2005 โดยการวิเคราะห์การสร้างความหมายแบบพหุวิธี (Multimodal Analysis) ผ่านคำและภาพประกอบ การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลแบ่งได้ 5 หัวข้อหลักได้แก่ สี สัญลักษณ์การเย็บปัก คุณยายของ Satrapi ฟองน้ำคำพูด และกรอบ และหัวข้อที่เป็นสากล ผลการวิเคราะห์แสดงให้เห็นว่า สิทธิของสตรีชาวอิหร่านถูกกดทับโดยชนบทธรรมเนียมทางศาสนาและวัฒนธรรมชายเป็นใหญ่ซึ่งเป็นไปตามการเหมารวมทางอุดมคติที่มีต่อผู้หญิงที่อาศัยอยู่ในแถบตะวันออกกลาง แต่น่าสนใจก็คือผู้วิจัยได้พบว่า

บันทึกของ Satrapi ได้นำเสนอภาพลักษณ์ของสตรีชาวอิหร่านที่ไปขัดแย้งกับชนบธรรมเนียมอาทิเช่น การนำเสนอภาพผู้หญิงที่ไม่คลุมฮิญาบ การพูดคุยเรื่องการทำศัลยกรรมและขั้นตอนการผ่าตัดเพื่อซ่อมแซมเยื่อพรหมจารี นอกจากนั้นแล้วผู้เขียนยังนำเสนอพฤติกรรมของสตรีชาวอิหร่านที่มักจะชอบทำร่วมกันเมื่ออยู่ในที่ลับตาจากผู้ชายนั่นก็คือการนินทาซึ่งถือว่าเป็นกลยุทธสากลสำหรับผู้หญิงในการแสดงพลังอำนาจเมื่ออยู่ในกลุ่มของพวกเธอ แต่อย่างไรก็ตามการเล่าเรื่องใน *Embroideries* ได้ถูกถ่ายทอดจากมุมมองของ Satrapi แต่เพียงผู้เดียวเท่านั้น จึงทำให้ผลของการวิจัยและการตีความของงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ค่อนข้างเฉพาะและจำกัดและอาจจะไม่สามารถตีความครอบคลุมถึงภาพลักษณ์ของสตรีชาวอิหร่านทุกคนในสังคมนั้นได้

**คำสำคัญ:** การนำเสนอภาพลักษณ์ของสตรีชาวอิหร่าน ลักษณะเฉพาะทางเพศ  
การวิเคราะห์การสร้างความหมายแบบพหุวิธี Marjane Satrapi, *Embroideries*

## Abstract

Since the lives of veiled women especially in Iran have become academic interests regarding gender stereotype and sexism, several studies have purposed various perspectives on how they live, struggle and negotiate their power in the society. To extend this line of research, this study therefore aims at investigating the portrayals of Iranian women in Marjane Satrapi's *Embroideries* by employing Multimodal Analysis (MA). Words and images were taken into account for analysis that were then divided into five main issues to discuss: *colors, symbolic embroideries, Satrapi's grandmother, speech bubble and panel frame and universal topics*. The findings revealed that women's rights in Iran are oppressed by patriarchal and religious tradition, which ideologically align with the Middle East women stereotype. Interestingly, this memoir also portrays the images of Iranian women that contradict the traditions by presenting the pictures of unveiled women and the issues of plastic surgery and surgical procedure of women's virginity restoration discussed among them. In addition to this, the author presents the hidden part of Iranian women, behind the closed door when men are away, where they straighten their power by using the universal strategy just like all women in the whole world do – gossip – to survive the hardship. However, the limitation of this study is recognized as the story was narrated through only

the author's lens. Therefore, the results and interpretations were specific and limited and might not be generalized to all women in Iranian society.

**Keywords:** Portrayals of Iranian women, gender stereotype, Multimodal Analysis (MA), Marjane Satrapi, Embroideries

## Introduction

In the past, it was difficult for any manuscript from or about Iran to get published by mainstream publishers (Mozaffari, 2006). But memoirs written by Iranian women have recently become the interest of mainstream publishers and also gained public interest from large audiences. The main reason is that those memoirs surprise the readers as they display the lives of Iranian people which contradict the image of Iran that the readers have seen on mass media. They also combine political and personal perspectives providing an easy access for readers to get into deeper understanding for the “complex world problems” (p. 517).

According to Jelodar and Yusof (2014), it was believed that the East started to be painted in a darker way after the 9/11 tragedy by the West through mass media, arts, and literatures trying to shape the stereotypical representation of the Orient using images of Eastern veiled women as the symbol of victims and seductions in Islamic society where women are not allowed to be unveiled in public places or to men outside the family leading the world to look at the East as the land of submission and slavery.

One of famous memoirs, centered on Iranian women and written by Iranian born women is *Embroideries*, originally published by L'Association as *Broderies* in 2003, translated and published in English as *Embroideries* in 2005 (Whitlock, 2008). The writer and also the illustrator is Marjane Satrapi who is said to be one of the “members of the younger generation of Iranian women” (Mozaffari, 2006, p. 517), and who “lived through the Iranian revolution as children” (p. 518). She learned the revolution through the lens of her politicized middle- and upper-class parents and siblings, but she was “horrified by the consequent triumph of the religious groups and the imposition of a strict, Islamist political ideology in every realm of life (p. 518). The younger generation were well aware,

especially “of the legal, educational, professional, and physical restrictions that this ideology brought with it” (Mozaffari, 2006, p. 518).

In addition, Satrapi is also believed to be an outstanding person admired by Middle East women (Reyns-Chikuma & Lazreg, 2017) and the first one to present the unique insight into a complex world and her books were appraised and regarded as a symbol of optimism for Iranians, for women, and for other artists (Attenberg, 2005, p. 101). Her first best-selling books *Perspolis* are memoirs of her childhood in Iran, her adolescence in Austria, and her early adulthood. *Embroideries* is also another memoir of the author, but centered only at one long afternoon talk of Satrapi with her grandmother, mother, aunt, and their group of friends. According to Whitlock (2008)’s remark, the book portrays past stories, and world of women where her gender rights are challenged.

Freely (2005) notes the similarity between *Perspolis* and *Embroideries* that they both are in the same setting – a cruelly policed society where an extremely rich culture is still strong and powerful, but behind closed doors, women are creative, amused, erotic, resistant, at least when the men are sleeping.

Topics of women’s conversation in *Embroideries* are full of surprises. They are simultaneously relaxing and dark because the conversation occurred in a country, “where a woman is considered half the worth of a man” (Attenberg, 2005, p. 100). *Embroideries* reveals the territory of the intimate and a secret space of women in Iran where they feel relaxed and free to say and share whatever they wish and whatever experience they’ve had without hesitation and fear of judgement and punishment and as the story continues, the universal topics such as plastic surgery, the male anatomy, sexual satisfaction, and marital adultery are emerged (Mozaffari, 2006).

To sum up, *Embroideries* is another acclaimed Satrapi’s memoir narrated in a context of women who live within a strict and Islamist political ideology where women are stereotyped by the West as a victims and slaves in the society. The stories of women in *Embroideries* reflect the lives of Iranian women and some of their topics shared by women in the story are familiar and universal, such as sex, plastic surgery, and infidelity which may intrigue, surprise and have strong effect on the readers’ perspective of the

Eastern world. However, there is also an argument that *Embroideries* is just a reinscription of Eastern stereotype (Jelodar & Yusof, 2014).

In terms of mode, Saunders (2005) suggests that *Embroideries* is not considered as graphic novel or cartoon, but a mixture of the two. Satrapi's simple images and words have "a remarkable ability to capture the coexistence of the serious and the absurd in the most complex of situation" (Mozaffari, 2006, p. 525).

The researchers of this study; therefore, aim to examine the multimodality approach; images, words as well as other modes, to analyze the interrelations and how they contribute to create the representation of women in Iran through Marjane Satrapi's lens.

## Objective and research question

The objective of this study was to analyze semiotic modes and written texts based on five main elements: *colors, symbolic embroideries, Satrapi's grandmother, speech bubble and panel frame and universal topics* in order to explore the portrayals of Iranian women in Marjane Satrapi's *Embroideries* (2005). The purposed research question is stated below.

How were the portrayals of Iranian women in Marjane Satrapi's *Embroideries* (2005) depicted through semiotic modes and written texts?

## Methodology

This article is a qualitative research which employs a qualitative multimodal analysis (MA). Multimodal analysis (MA) is an extended area emerging from discourse studies. This emphasizes the study of language in combination with other modes such as pictures, colors, action, scientific symbols, and sound (O'Halloran, 2006). According to Jing (2013), MA aims to analyze how all of the different semiotic modes and linguistic visual means work together to create a unified and meaningful text or communicative event. For example, in graphic novel, according to Hamlyn (2017), the interplay of text and illustrations in a comic-strip format can tell a story. As Hamlyn elaborates, graphical elements such as panels, frames, and speech/thought balloons can be used in a sequential

way to create and evoke a story in a reader's mind, rather than relying on just text to construct a narrative.

In addition, meaning created by the combination of modes can go beyond what each mode can do independently (Lemke, 2002, as cited in Smith & Pole, 2018), the related social meaning, such as current social, cultural, scientific, ecological and political background, must be taken into account in order to interpret the meaning properly (Scott, 1994, as cited in Jing, 2013). Thus, the elements that are creatively used in narrations eventually interact meaningfully, show authorial voice, and portray the complexity of life (Campbell, 2007). It is, therefore, undeniably concluded that the multimodality increases complexity of the meaning (Smith & Pole, 2018) and multimodal analysis is then necessarily needed to understand the dynamics of meaning-making, or semiosis, in multimodal discourse (Campbell, 2007).

The data of this present study were collected from the graphic novel titled “*Embroideries*” written by Marjane Satrapi, published by Pantheon Books in 2005. Both linguistic and semiotic resources including dialogues, pictures, speech and thought bubbles and colors were taken into consideration for analysis and interpretation. For validity of the findings, the two researchers of the present study began the analysis process with reading and skimming the novel to identify the major themes related to the portrayals of Iranian women. After that, two lists of themes were cross-checked and the duplicated ones were combined. At this stage, the different ones were also discussed and added if significant. The final list of themes was then analyzed using thick description in which detailed interpretation was included.

## Results and discussion

The major themes agreed by the two researchers are *colors, symbolic embroideries, Satrapi's grandmother, speech bubble and panel frame and universal topics*. Each of them was analyzed in this section.

### Colors: Black, White, Cream, Blue

Colors are most often introduced as symbolic signs or symbols (Hannele & Marie-Nathalie, 2018). For the whole of *Embroideries*, text and images are illustrated in stark black and white except for the front cover which is presented in cream and inside-cover in blue.

Black and white style is well known as Satrapi's trademark (Attenberg, 2005) despite the fact that most graphic novelists use bright color (Acho, 2013). Based on Worth (2007), black and white colors can relate to two principle concepts of comic art; "amplification through simplification", and "inverse relationship between the presentation of the physical world and the world of ideas" (p. 154).

Colors can also be a visual modality marker and can indicate sexual attractiveness and appeal of the represented female image, and when the color is reduced, the modality of the image is lowered (Baykal, 2016). From this remark, it can be implied that the attractiveness and appeal of the represented female image in *Embroideries* are considered low.

Acho (2013) reviewed Satrapi's *Perspolis* that black and white can represent "a stark counterpoint to the complex themes of torture, war, and suicide" (pp. 28–29). Hence, the same concept linking black and white to something tragic can be applied in *Embroideries* as it also presents the complex themes of tragedy and pain of women who were treated unjustly under religious dictatorship in Iran (Whitlock, 2008).

Furthermore, black and white colors may reflect Iranian restricted religious dress code which allows only dark colors such as black, dark gray, brown or dark blue (Shirazi, as cited in Patel, 2012, p. 304) while some pious women choose to wear only black and white (Patel, 2012).

Despite the black and white dominance in *Embroideries*, cream and blue colors are added in the front cover and inside cover (shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The front cover portrays Satrapi's grandmother with cream and blue background. There are few definitions of cream color. According to Chapman (2010), cream color has a common meaning of calm, elegant, and purity while Website named

*Universe of Symbolism* defines the color cream as a variation of the white which symbolizes innocent, purity, faith and peace. The meanings in these two sources match with the image of Satrapi's grandmother which is extracted from the scene where the grandmother is at the party. She looks pure, innocent, and elegant in her white dress. Apart from that, the meanings of cream color may also reveal the image of Iranian women who are believed to be pure, innocent, have faith in religion as portrayed by Western ideology.

Blue can be interpreted as a sign that represents a cure, a fresh and calming impact on the body "as its iconic relation with objects such as water and the sky" (Hannele & Marie-Nathalie, 2018, p.111). The definition of blue for 'a cure, a fresh and calming impact on the body' together with one of the meaning of cream color as 'calm' (Chapman, 2010) can be linked to one of the stories told by the grandmother (Figure 3) that when she was younger, before she went to parties, she would take a little opium in order to make her eyelids heavy and give her a languorous look. As well as when she gets old, she becomes opium addict and needs small bit of burnt opium dissolved in a tea every morning to calm her down from "a very very bad mood".

Colors are also part of culture, in English, blue is a special metaphor to express one's sad feelings while in Persian, black refers to sadness (Mashak et al, 2012). Black and white are also believed to symbolize mourning in some cultures (Hannele & Marie-Nathalie, 2018). Those colors might play a significant part in *Embroideries* as a metaphor referring to mourning in sadness for the tough lives of women in Iran. According to Olson (2005)'s comment, stories of women in *Embroideries* about sex and men are "frank, funny, occasionally sad, and utterly credible" (p. 1351).

A few colorful pages might also refer to resistant act of women. Whitlock (2008) notes that women in Iran resist against the Islamic social control over women through small acts of opposition, such as "colored veils, nail polish, sandals—the "soft weapons" of a lipstick jihad" (p. 12).



In sum, colors in *Embroideries* can contribute to represent lives of women in Iran. Their lives might be in a monotone color; black or white, but their stories also uncover the colorful sides, even though they are not bright colors. The use of cream and blue can imply Iranian women's survival strategies, under the patriarchal and the strong religious tradition.

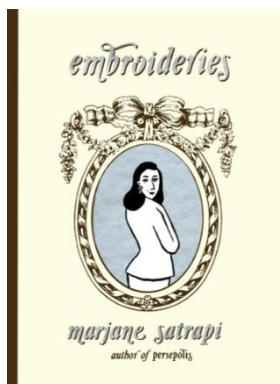


Figure 1: The use of cream color in the front cover



Figure 2: The use of blue color in the inside cover



Figure 3: Story told by grandmother related to cream and blue colors

## Symbolic Embroideries

Based on Cambridge dictionary, “Embroidery”, as a countable noun, means patterns or pictures that consist of stitches sewn directly onto cloth (Embroidery, n.d.). In line with Cambridge dictionary, Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries gives a similar definition with more explanation that embroidery means patterns that are sewn onto cloth using threads of various colors; cloth that is decorated in this way (Embroidery, n.d.).

In order to contribute to the literal meaning of the word ‘embroidery’, Satrapi also uses illustrations to explicitly and implicitly refer to the term. For example, some texts are drawn to look the same as the stitches sewn onto the cloth as Figure 4 and Figure 5 shown below.



Figure 4: Text drawn as stitches



Figure 5: Text drawn as stitches

The illustrations of cloth in an embroidery hoop decorated with the word ‘Embroideries’ along with thread and needle are also presented in the book as presented in Figures 6 and Figure 7.



Figure 6: Embroideries sewn onto cloth  
in an embroidery hoop

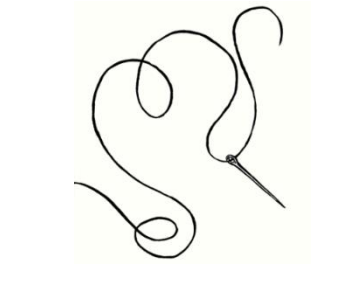


Figure 7: Thread and needle

There are also other symbolic signs; for example, embellishment on the cover shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 portraying the cut-out image of Satrapi's grandmother, when she was younger, displayed inside an oval shaped- frame which is ornately decorated.

Another symbolic sign of 'embroidery' may relate to the way the women gathering in circle presented in Figure 8 and then the circle is embellished and refined with their stories shown in Figure 9 (Saunders, 2005).



**Figure 8:** Women gathering in circle



**Figure 9:** Women talking in circle position

Notwithstanding the literal meaning, the word 'embroidery' in Satrapi's *Embroideries* can also be a metaphor. It can refer to "fancy stitching in the surgical sense" (Saunders, 2005, p. 53). For example, one woman talks about plastic surgery on her breasts shown in Figure 10 and another one on her nose presented in Figure 11. Satrapi also shares her story of herself when she was young that she saved money to take her grandmother to get a nose surgery, but finally wasted her saving on toys demonstrated in Figure 12.



Figure 10: Embroideries symbolized as plastic surgery



Figure 11: Embroideries symbolized as plastic surgery



Figure 12: Embroideries symbolized as plastic surgery

Embroidery can also mean unsettling resonance referring to a surgical procedure of women's virginity restoration (Attenberg, 2005; Olson, 2005; Saunders, 2005; Whitlock, 2008). According to Whitlock (2008), "embroidery is an Iranian colloquialism for surgery on the vagina to restore the semblance of virginity", (p. 20). For example, Satrapi's grandmother tells Satrapi "And so my child, since you preferred your toys to my

nose, I am offering you a chance to redeem yourself. Make me a gift of a full embroidery” portrayed in Figure 13, and then Satrapi and other women laughs hardly since they all understand the underlying connotation perfectly illustrated in Figure 14.



Figure 13: *Embroideries* (2005),  
Marjane Satrapi



Figure 14: *Embroideries* (2005),  
Marjane Satrapi

The concept of virginity can be found across the stories which may be concluded that this issue is seriously held by Iranian society. The first story shared by the women also begins with Satrapi's grandmother's advice to her friend to fake her virginity on the first night of the marriage shown in Figure 15.

There is also a debate between Satrapi's aunt and others since her aunt disagrees with women to get virginity repair only for men's satisfaction. For example, one woman says "Obviously! Women's morals are relaxing! Today's girls are no longer virgins before marriage. They do everything like men and get sewn up again to get married! This way, everyone is happy!" shown in Figure 16. And the aunt says "And why is it the women who have to be virgins? Why suffer torment to satisfy an asshole? Because the man who demands "virginity" from a woman is nothing but an asshole! Why don't we behave as westerners do!? For them, since the problem of sex is resolved, they can move on to other things! This is the reason they progress!!!" as presented in Figure 17.



Figure 15: Faking virginity advised by Satrapi's grandmother



Figure 16: The debate between Satrapi's aunt and others on virginity repair



Figure 17: Aunt's insistence on not to repair virginity

In conclusion, Satrapi is successful in employing the word and visuals of "Embroideries". At the beginning, Satrapi puzzles the readers with the word and visuals of Embroideries which increase their interest to read on and find out how the words and visuals relate to the story. And when the readers read on, they get to understand the remarkable concept which reflects reality of women in Iran. While they still need to

conform to the strict tradition, their lives evolve with the modern world. Even though the virginity of women is highly held in Iran, it becomes common in the society for women to have sex before marriage. Embroidery or virginity repair can be seen as a strategy that women in Iran try to find the balance between the modern and old worlds.

### **Satrapi's grandmother**

The use of image of Satrapi's grandmother on a cover can also be seen as another symbolic sign of Iranian women portrayal in *Embroideries*. Satrapi also puts her grandmother as a leading character. At the first page of the narration, it begins with the stories of how grandmother always addresses her husband by last name because she believes that this shows how one respect one's husband as shown in Figure 18. In addition, Satrapi narrated how she has a bad mood before having an opium; and how she advises Satrapi to learn to close her eyes a little in order to find lovers more easily. The afternoon tea talk is also open by grandmother with the phrase "To speak behind others' backs is the ventilator of the heart" as presented in Figure 19.

Satrapi's grandmother often appeared in her first memoirs *Perspolis* but it is because of *Embroideries* that the readers get to know more facts about her grandmother, such as the facts that she is an opium addict and has gotten married for three times.

A cut-out image of Satrapi's youthful grandmother on the front and inside covers as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 is also showing her face unveiled. The image is taken from one of the stories told by Satrapi inside the book. Her image is cut from one splash page illustration of grandmother, unveiled and in a glamorous dress, at the party when she was young, with three men standing behind her along with Satrapi's narration written that "Thanks to her half-closed eyes, my grandma got married three times. My grandfather was her last husband" as presented in Figure 20.

Her cut-out image in Figure 1 and Figure 2 turning her back to the readers can be implied that the world sees the lives of women in Iran only at the surface. A cover may refer to a public place, then grandmother without veil on the cover contrasts with the fact of the Middle East women whom the world always sees with veil on.

The use of her youthful grandmother image on the cover and as the leading character may signify that Satrapi would like her grandmother to play a role as a symbol of women in Iran, in the way she would like them to be, to be like her grandmother, who lives and survives in the country where women's rights have been restricted since the Islamic Revolution, just like her interview in Attenberg (2005)'s article "I just want women to stop putting themselves in the situation of victim" (p. 100).



Figure 18: Grandmother's statement on the first page of the narration



Figure 19: Opening statement by grandmother before the afternoon tea talk



Figure 20: Satrapi's narration about her grandmother at young



### Speech bubble and panel frame

No panel frames are used in *Embroideries*. On several pages, Satrapi also provides no speech bubbles as shown in Figure 21, while some pages are overwhelmed with bubbles as shown in Figure 23. This can refer to Satrapi's effort to reflect ventilation of the heart of women. Figure 19 shows grandmother's speech bubble saying "To speak behind others' backs is the ventilator of the heart" along with the narrated text "Everyone gathered around this drink in order to devote themselves to their favorite activity: DISCUSSION". The emphasis on the word 'discussion' can be seen clearly as it is written in capital letters which can be referred to author's attempt to draw the readers' attention.

There is also one splash page illustrating one woman drinking tea as shown in Figure 22 along with text saying "and in this way we began a long session of ventilation of the heart..."

"The women gathered around the samovar all have tales of broken hearts, tyrannical parents and oppressive husbands" (Saunders, 2005, p.54). The way Satrapi uses no panels on the pages and uses bubbles only in some pages may be interpreted that she wants the readers to emphasize on texts to represent the ventilation of the women, and in this way, the verbal content becomes more outstanding (Olson, 2005) and reflects the graphic representation of gossip (Whitlock, 2008).

As for some pages that the bubbles are used as shown in Figure 23, they seem to be used for only the purpose of separating the different speeches from different speakers as they are talking at the same time.

To sum up, ventilation of the heart of women in the grandmother's saying can refer to discussion or in other words, gossiping, likely on the topics that cannot be talked about when men are around. The author seems to emphasize the freedom of women discussion behind the closed door by using no panels and no bubbles on most pages. In this way, the text of their discussion is highlighted and freely expressed.



Figure 21: No speech bubbles used

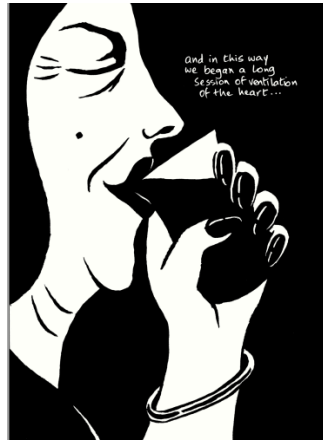


Figure 22: No speech bubbles used



Figure 23: Speech bubbles used

### Universal topics

Some topics of discussion in *Embroideries* are universal which are familiar to all readers. As Saunders (2005) suggests, women in *Embroideries* discuss “the same things women have discussed since Eve left Eden – love, sex, and the intricate politics of love and sex” (p. 53), like the first story told by grandmother about her friend who are in love with one man but is forced to marry another man as shown in Figure 24.

There are also studies indicating all-women groups appreciate humor on topics related to sex and sexuality (Lundell, 1993; Bing, 2007). Most of the topics of discussion in *Embroideries* are dedicated to sex, such as, how to fake virginity on the first night; the story of one woman who have never seen men’s penis despite having four kids; the use of gesture and sound to demonstrate love-making “And then Bam! Bam! Bam!” as illustrated in Figure 25; and women’s criticizing men’s penis “a dick isn’t really photogenic”, one woman says as depicted in Figure 26.

And despite the image of the Middle East women shaped as the victim by the whole world, the discussion of women in *Embroideries* may reveal they are just the same as other women – “authentic bitches and gossips who argue and backbite” (p. 54). For example, in Figure 27, one woman gets plastic surgery in order to satisfy her husband “Of course this idiot doesn’t know that every time he kisses my breast, it’s actually my ass he’s kissing” she says.

In summary, it can be implied that Iranian women in *Embroideries* seem to be far from the ideology defined by the West. They are not both victims and slaves. They are the same as other women who prefer to gossip about sexual activities.



Figure 24: Love story told by grandmother



Figure 25: The use of gesture and sound to demonstrate love-making



Figure 26: Women's criticizing men's penis



Figure 27: Getting plastic surgery for husband's satisfaction

## Conclusion

From a multimodal analysis, it can be seen that a variety of modes can work well together to wonderfully represent the lives of women in Iran through Satrapi's memory. Black and white colors in the whole book play a significant part in portraying most part of tragic lives of the Middle East women who have been oppressed by patriarchal and religious tradition while six pages of pale cream and dark blue represent another part of those women's lives which seem to have a little bit of colors, especially when they gather behind the closed door away from men. The repeated word of 'Embroideries' together with related illustrations clearly reflects Iranian men's ideology forcing women to stay virgin, fake virginity, or even get virginity repaired before marriage. The use of Satrapi's grandmother as the main lead character also presents symbolic meaning as the role model of Iranian women who has learned to survive in very strict society. For speech bubbles and panel frames, they often have no frames, no speech bubbles, or very long sentences in bubbles. These are to allow ventilation of Iranian women's heart to flow in order to relieve their stress. Lastly, the majority of topics among Satrapi's relatives are related to sexual activity which is commonly known as universal topic implying that even though Iranian women have been painted as the victims by the West, they are the same as women from most parts of the world who brag about their sexual lives, but again, unfortunately, this happens only behind the close door.

However, the story is presented through only one person's lens, from Marjane Satrapi's memory only. It would be wise for the readers to be aware that there might be other facets which have not yet been shared to the whole world.

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## Appendix Elements of Graphic Novel

